

VZCZCXRO1793
OO RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHBS #1345/01 2421416
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 291416Z AUG 08
FM USEU BRUSSELS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHCH/AMEMBASSY CHISINAU IMMEDIATE
RUEHKV/AMEMBASSY KYIV IMMEDIATE
RUEHSC/AMEMBASSY MINSK IMMEDIATE
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE
RUEHSI/AMEMBASSY TBILISI IMMEDIATE
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE IMMEDIATE
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRUSSELS 001345

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/28/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EUN](#) [OSCE](#) [UK](#) [RU](#) [BO](#) [MD](#) [GG](#)

SUBJECT: DAS MERKEL DISCUSSES RUSSIA, BELARUS, UKRAINE,
MOLDOVA WITH EU

Classified By: POLMINCOUNS Christopher Davis for reasons 1.4 (a) and (d)
)

11. (C) Summary: Deputy Assistant Secretary David Merkel discussed Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova with EU officials in Brussels August 24 and 25. EU officials discussed their expectations for an extraordinary European Council meeting on Georgia and Russia September 1. Just back from Minsk, Merkel discussed possible responses by the U.S. and EU to the release of political prisoners in Belarus. On Ukraine, they discussed the upcoming September 9 EU-Ukraine summit. On Moldova, they compared notes on possible messages to send President Voronin.

12. (U) Merkel met with Helga Schmid, Council Secretariat Director of the Policy Planning Unit; Pirkka Tapiola, Policy Advisor on Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova; Hugues Mingarelli, Commission Deputy Director General for External Relations and European Neighborhood Policy; Christine Roger, French Political and Security Committee Ambassador; Carl Hallergard, Advisor to EU High Representative Solana; and Kalman Mizsei, EU Special Representative for Moldova. End Summary.

Russia/Georgia

13. (C) French Political and Security Committee Ambassador Christine Roger told visiting DAS David Merkel that the EU,s September 1 extraordinary Council meeting will focus on four areas. EU Heads of State and Government will discuss the situation on the ground in Georgia; possibilities for enhancing the EU presence in support of the ceasefire in Georgia; EU humanitarian and development assistance to Georgia; and EU relations with Russia. Roger said that member states would most likely agree to deploy EU monitors with a mandate complementing that of the OSCE military monitoring officers (MMOs). She added that down the road, this mission could evolve into a peacekeeping mission, if there was agreement by the Russians. Merkel told interlocutors that in the U.S. view, EU and OSCE monitors should eliminate the need for Russian patrols. Merkel also stressed that if there were costs for actions already taken by Russia, then EU threats regarding future actions would have more credibility. However, neither Roger nor Council contacts we spoke to expected the EU to agree to strong immediate consequences for Russia,s behavior. Rather, they predicted that EU leaders would impose requirements on Russia for moving forward with a constructive relationship.

14. (C) Carl Hallergard, Advisor to EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana, told Merkel that many member states feel that there is logic in taking a stronger stance against Russia in the NATO forum than in the EU, since the EU has political capital in implementing the agreement reached and wants its monitors to be able to operate quickly on the ground. They see a trade-off between "taking sides" and "being involved." Merkel agreed that EU presence was important, but should not come at too high a cost. Roger said that if Russian President Medvedev decided to recognize the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, there would likely be a strong reaction by the European Council. (Note: the meetings took place August 25, before Medvedev's decision to go forward with recognition. End Note) Merkel stressed the importance of conveying that recognition would have consequences for EU-Russia relations and noted the value of bolstering other countries in the region.

15. (C) Hallergard told Merkel that in addition to providing more money and experts on the ground, the assistance component of the European Council meeting would likely include a look at remedying the problem of cheaper, easier travel to the EU for Russian passport holders in Georgia. He noted that Solana would likely travel to Georgia prior to the September 1 European Council meeting.

Belarus

16. (C) Merkel briefed interlocutors on his trip to Minsk and

BRUSSELS 00001345 002 OF 002

suggested that the United States and EU coordinate responses to recent positive developments in Belarus. Merkel's interlocutors agreed on the need to respond quickly to the release of political prisoners, with both Council Secretariat and Commission interlocutors stressing that waiting until after the Belarus elections could discourage Minsk from taking further steps. At the same time, it would be important to keep some of the pressure on Minsk in the lead-up to elections. Council Secretariat Director for Policy Planning Helga Schmid and Policy Advisor Pirkka Tapiola said that the Council Secretariat was considering the possibility of suspending the EU's visa ban. Tapiola explained that suspension would be the easiest model on which to get EU consensus, allowing for an announcement before the elections. Suspension of the visa ban, Tapiola explained, did not mean officials would necessarily get a visa. It would be the prerogative of member states. Merkel said that if the EU made that announcement, the USG would express support and state that we would review our own list following the elections. Merkel noted that the opposition was considering boycotting the elections, but that the main opposition leaders supported our engagement with Minsk. Commission Deputy Director General Hugues Mingarelli told Merkel he planned to travel to Belarus August 29 at the request of Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner. His objective would be to acknowledge the positive steps Minsk had taken while conveying what still needed to be done. Merkel noted he had delivered the same message to Minsk as the EU regarding steps the government needed to take to improve the election process. Tapiola said he planned to be in Belarus during the elections not as an official observer, but to observe the general atmosphere.

Ukraine

17. (C) Merkel said the timing of the EU) Ukraine summit, to be held September 9, was excellent, allowing the EU an opportunity to show support for Russia's neighbors at a critical moment. Council Secretariat interlocutors and the French PSC ambassador agreed, but cautioned that Ukraine's expectations had to be dampened down. They noted that EU member states were divided on enlargement, and the lack of

ratification of the Lisbon treaty had exacerbated the problem. Council Secretariat contacts noted High Rep Solana might try to call Prime Minister Julia Tymoshenko later the week of August 25.

Moldova

18. (C) Merkel discussed with EU interlocutors the importance of having conversations with Moldovan President Voronin before he went to the 3 plus 2 meeting in Vienna September 8.

The objective, Merkel said, should be to reaffirm to Voronin that the U.S. and EU are looking for opportunities to help Moldova, particularly given the grim prospects for progress on Transnistria.

19. (U) This message has not been cleared by DAS Merkel.

MURRAY

.